

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05 NIC-01 SAJ-01 OMB-01 /081 W

----- 021981

R 041619Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7711

INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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USLO PEKING

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: THE THOUGHTS OF CHAIRMAN STRAUSS

REF: BONN 00619, MUNICH 0179

SUMMARY: SINCE RETURNING FROM CHINA, CSU LEADER FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS HAS BEEN MODERATE AND STATESMANLIKE IN HIS PUBLIC COMMENTS. AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE IN MUNICH JANUARY 28 AND IN AN INTERVIEW FEBRUARY 2 ON GERMAN TELEVISION, STRAUSS CAREFULLY AVOIDED OVERPLAYING THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS VISIT TO CHINA AND THE MEETING WITH MAO. THE GERMAN PRESS, WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE EXCEPTION OF POKING SLIGHT FUN AT STRAUSS BY SHOWING

HIM DRESSED UP AS CHAIRMAN MAO, HAS ALSO BEEN RESTRAINED IN REPORTING ON STRAUSS SINCE HIS RETURN. STRAUSS IS PLAYING A WAITING GAME PENDING THE RESULTS OF THE KEY LAENDER ELECTIONS BEFORE DECIDING WHOM HE WILL SUPPORT AS CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE OR IF HE WILL BE A CANDIDATE HIMSELF. END SUMMARY

1. IN A JANUARY 28 INTERVIEW, STRAUSS STRESSED THAT THE CDU/CSU ACCEPTED THE EASTERN TREATIES AS THE LAW OF THE LAND BUT CALLED FOR FIRMER ACTION TO SEE THAT THE TREATY OBLIGATIONS WERE CARRIED OUT BY BOTH SIDES. STRAUSS ALSO PLAYED DOWN THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF HIS VISIT TO CHINA, SAYING, IN EFFECT, THAT A VISIT TO CHINA OR TO THE SOVIET UNION COULD NOT AND SHOULD NOT PLAY A ROLE IN DOMESTIC GERMAN POLITICS. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA.

2. IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHETHER STRAUSS PLANS TO MAKE A BID FOR THE NUMBER ONE SPOT ON THE CDU/CSU TICKET. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT HIS POLITICAL STRENGTH HAS GROWN SINCE THE SMASHING CSU VICTORY IN BAVARIA. HOWEVER, PARTY INSIDERS BELIEVE THAT STRAUSS WILL NOT RISK DEFEAT BY RUNNING FOR THE CHANCELLORSHIP. DESPITE A HISTORY OF REBOUNDED FROM SERIOUS DEFEATS IN THE PAST (E.G., THE "SPIEGEL" AFFAIR IN 1962), THEY BELIEVE THAT A DEFEAT AS CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE WOULD FINISH HIS NATIONAL CAREER. IT IS MORE LIKELY, ACCORDING TO THESE SOURCES, THAT HE WILL EITHER THROW HIS SUPPORT BEHIND THE STRONGEST CANDIDATE FOLLOWING THE LAENDER ELECTIONS IN RHEINLAND-PFALZ, SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN AND NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA, OR THAT HE WILL PRESS FOR CDU/CSU FRAKTION LEADER CARSTENS AS A COMPROMISE CANDIDATE.

3. RIGHT NOW, STRAUSS IS PLAYING A WAITING GAME AND PROJECTING AN IMAGE OF REASONABLENESS
THE FATE
OF THE OTHER POTENTIAL CANDIDATES (KOHL AND STOLTENBERG)
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IN THE LAENDER ELECTIONS, THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY (INCLUDING A PROGNOSIS ABOUT FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS) IN SPRING AND THE EXPERIENCE GAINED FROM CAMPAIGNING IN NORTHERN GERMANY WILL AFFECT HIS DECISION ABOUT THE CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE CDU/CSU WILL CHOOSE A CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE EITHER BY A CONSENSUS AMONG THE KEY LEADERSHIP PERSONALITIES IF A SINGLE STRONG CANDIDATE EMERGES, OR THROUGH THE

CREATION OF A SPECIAL BODY MADE UP OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE CDU, THE CSU AND THE FRAKTION (IF THERE IS MORE
THAN ONE CANDIDATE AFTER THE LAENDER ELECTIONS) BEFORE
THE PARTY CONGRESS SCHEDULED FOR THE END OF JUNE.
HILLENBRAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LEADERS, PRESS CONFERENCES, ELECTION CANDIDATES, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BONN01891
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750041-0036
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750276/aaaacpwh.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BONN 00619, 75 MUNICH 0179
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <15 MAY 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE THOUGHTS OF CHAIRMAN STRAUSS
TAGS: PINT, GE, (STRAUSS, FRANZ JOSEF)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006